

# INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



## THE AIRPORT WON'T BE OUR WHITE ELEPHANT

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

Sullivan County's airport has always been underutilized. But it's also been underrated. And both need to change.

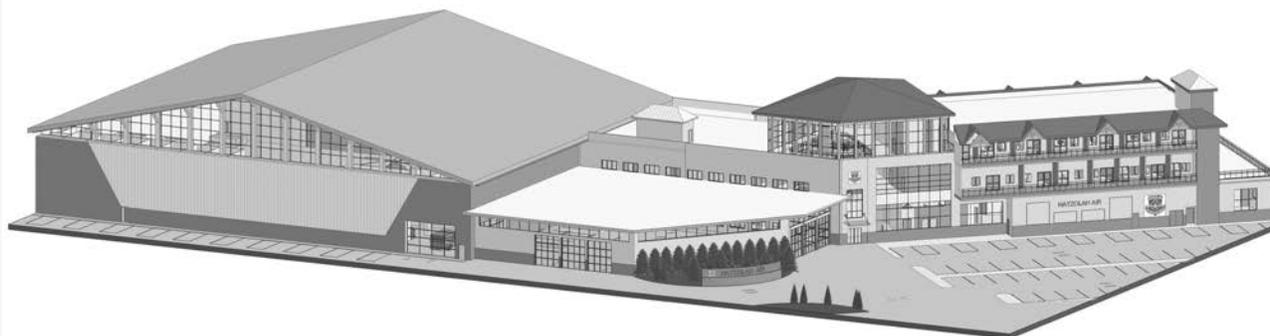
That's why the Legislature and I are excited about HatzolAir's plan to build their world headquarters at the airport. This is a well-established, world-renowned charitable organization that has saved many lives and improved countless more. We're proud to host them and look at this project as precipitating a reassessment of the airport by both non- and for-profit enterprises that need easy and regionally inexpensive access to the skies. The interest is building, and we intend this to finally lead to a long-awaited return on taxpayers' investment.

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HatzolAir's conceptual sketch of their world headquarters at the County Airport

# FEEDING THE COUNTY FROM HEART TO MOUTH

I recently took time to visit Cornell Cooperative Extension to get an up-close look at an amazing effort: The Sullivan Fresh Community Cupboard. Operated by Cornell's Beth DiBartolo, Marty Colavito and crew, the Cupboard provides - get this - 700 people every week with enough food for at least two meals a day!

And they do it on the run, first picking up items from the Hudson Valley Food Bank at a meeting point in Monticello, transferring them to the Extension's offices in Liberty (where perishables are kept in gigantic refrigerators), then jumping in the Sullivan Fresh truck to distribute the food to every corner of Sullivan County. The work they do is mind-blowing, but so is the depth of the need in our community. That's why I'm very glad County government is part of this crucial lifeline, contributing \$50,000 in support. No one in our County need go hungry, but if you or someone you know is, please have them contact 845-807-0925.





Whether you support or oppose gambling, it's a fact that we've benefitted financially from the local casino and harness track presence via statutorily required payments to us as a host community. These funds have significantly offset costs that otherwise would have led to tax increases at the County, town and school district level:

- 2021: \$2,844,707
- 2020: \$1,185,528.74
- 2019: \$2,788,177.93

*(These figures do not include payments made to the Town of Thompson or Monticello School District.)*

As casinos proliferate throughout the State - particularly in New York City - we've initiated discussions with Resorts World Catskills leaders and our State representatives to ensure our years of effort to host the largest casino resort in New York are not ultimately undermined by gambling operations closer to the populations from which we draw visitors.

We've held our own very well compared to other upstate casinos, and I think we'll continue to be attractive even to casino patrons who have closer alternatives - because those locations don't offer the resort experience, the natural beauty, and the soon-to-open golf course (successor to the Concord's famed Monster) that Resorts World does. And don't forget that the Kartrite water park - itself a complete resort - sits within walking distance.

We're well-positioned to remain competitive, but we cannot afford to be complacent.

## A CONTRACT THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE

I'm pleased to say that three of our six unions have approved new labor contracts, and the County is actively negotiating with the other three to reach similar deals.

Here are the overall details, as of mid-May:

- Laborers Local 15 (representing our Public Works employees) will see 2.5% annual raises between 2022 and 2025, plus a 4% one-time raise this year
- The NYS Nurses Association (representing our nurses) will see 2% annual raises retroactive to 2021 and continuing to 2024, plus an experience differential
- Teamsters Local 445 (representing our Probation employees) will see 2.5% annual raises from 2022 to 2025, plus a one-time 4% raise this year, and a retroactive step schedule increase for 2021
- Negotiations are continuing with the Teamsters Local 445 Main Unit (representing the bulk of County employees), the Sheriff's PBA (representing our patrol deputies) and CSEA Local 853 (representing corrections workers)

Thanks to a good economy, steady tax revenue and the willingness of employees to switch to a less-costly health insurance plan, the County is well on its way to offering more competitive pay scales while also protecting taxpayers from high increases.



# MEMORIAL DAY: A TRIBUTE TO OUR HEROES

It's been said that Veterans Day is for the living and Memorial Day is for the dead. In one sense, that's true, as we honor living veterans on Veterans Day and deceased veterans on Memorial Day. But Memorial Day is about the living, too. Without us - the living - paying homage to our passed vets, Memorial Day would not have any meaning. I've been honored to share thoughts at several Memorial Day events, but what was most important to me and other speakers is that there were people present to listen. They attended to be a part of something special, to remember those who served, and to reflect on why and how they served. Memorial Day should not solely be about the start of summer, the return of warmer weather and vacation trips. Our veterans did not pledge - and sometimes give - their lives in defense of our freedoms just for us to lounge in the sun. They hoped to make a difference, and to give us a chance to do the same. So I encourage and invite you to join me and thousands of others this May 30 in taking just an hour or two to solemnly give thanks at one of the local ceremonies. The complete list will be posted in local media and at [www.sullivanny.us](http://www.sullivanny.us).



Memorial wreaths are placed every year in honor of the deceased during the County's Memorial Day ceremonies.



We ensure that every grave in our Veterans Cemetery in Liberty features a fresh American flag for Memorial Day. The cemetery, located along Sunset Lake Road, is also where we hold the County's official Memorial Day ceremonies.